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tions to his theory of æsthetics was still unsatisfied and looked forward the more keenly to what should come next. That fourth volume on Italian Painting was only the close to the quartette of indispensable handbooks. Nowhere have sounder words been written on the æsthetics of painting than the series embodies—nowhere in English, perhaps, any so important. But they are too few. To express the principles is only a part of any demonstration; it remains as well to deduce the consequences, to illustrate and distinguish, to establish and amplify. When a man stands at his ripest hour, with his mind at its best and happiest, then he should offer his best and profoundest thought. The day of little books is past; the time of postscripts has not come. But still Mr. Berenson teases our expectations, and instead of his *magnum opus* reprints a little special study of a very minor painter. To be sure, this unassuming volume hides grave matter; not only does Mr. Berenson reconstruct exquisitely a charming figure that Mr. Langton Douglas discovered for us so few years ago, and reproduce lovely pictures that he himself discovered, he modifies and more than half unsays certain dogmatic utterances of ten or fifteen years ago on the supremacy of Florentine painting and the hopeless inferiority of line to mass. He would hardly, we may judge from this, again dismiss so cursorily the rare genius of Matteo di Giovanni and his mates and forerunners at Siena. And, furthermore, he now deliberately fills out an aspect that the handbooks had left untouched and supplements them superbly with the indication of all that he might discuss in a strictly religious art. Still, this is a mere hint, an adumbration. We caution Mr. Berenson not to dally too long before he offers the firm reality of the great book he owes his generation.

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### FICTION.

IN a charming old-fashioned poem a little girl who has been by night to watch the fairies at work reports that she saw “the drops of water made and the ears of the green corn fill.” So one feels in reading “Celt and Saxon”;\* here one has a book in the making hewn out like Michael Angelo’s last sculpture,

\* “Celt and Saxon.” By George Meredith. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910. (By courtesy of “The Forum” and Mr. Mitchell Kennerley.)

but wanting yet the nicer chisel strokes from the great master's cunning hand. It is rather like meeting Richmond Roy in undress and looking at Diana Warwick in her bones. The novel is there, but not the style. It is not quite the same thing wanting the shifting lights, the dazzling, prismatic play of color and reflection; the divers colored web and the divers colored mind that we did not treasure enough when we had it.

To-day it seems like the unfinished window in Aladdin's palace. Not all the jewels of earth, nor all the earthly craftsmen can fulfil the rich commencement. There is a wealth of situation and a world of character. Patrick, who catches our keenest affection in the first sentence; his brother Philip, who is destined, we divine, to win it away from him; the princess with whom we are all in love, as aforetime with Amelia and Diana; the red-haired heiress who promises to capture us when Beauchamp's bride and Harry Richmond's had left us cold, and thereby to mark her creator's finest triumph over human nature in the cause of right reason—all these cross the stage and then vanish into thin air. Apart from the dramatic quality of the book, it is full of weighty matter, political and social. It is of to-day as completely as "Tono-Bungay" and much more vitally. What the "Egoist" did for man in the family, it promises to do for man in society. We are no longer at the first building of railways or at the Italian Resorgimento, splendid as such issues were; we are deep in the Irish question and organized charity and the problems of overgrown private wealth. We need sorely the wise counsels from a man wiser than his generation if for but two reasons: that he believed in the intangible and the impossible and kept his ear to the ground. Earth never counsels wrong to the fine ear! And what was Meredith's? From the very first chapter, when Patrick approaches the hills under a thunderous sky, there are bits of description as splendid as anything Richard saw or Carinthia Jane, where genius for a moment smelted the ore in the first heat. But more often the metal is not fused, lies all unready for working. The chapter on John Bull, for instance, sound in its wisdom, is tough of fibre and indigestible. Con's foolery wants aërating. Yet here and there the phrase flashes as of old, where, for example, Rodney hung "between gouty blood and luminous brain," or, "wore on his drawn eyelids and tightly drawn upper lip a look of lambent pugnacity,

awake to the challenge, indifferent to the challenge and disdainful of the antagonist." With the wit goes the old-time ripe wisdom: "Women must take the fate of marketable fruit till they can earn their own pennies and then they'll regulate the market." There spoke out the friend of women candidly and kindly. Or, again, an ironic phrase is transcribed from the philosopher's notebook: "Degeneracy is the critical history of the arts."

Yet throughout the incompleteness of the work is felt, and it approves what many lovers of English have long believed, that Meredith's style is as proper to our genius as Virgil's to the Latin and is as excellent in kind. In this novel we have all of Meredith except what some have called the crabbed perversity and some the injudicious prodigality of his style. Lacking this, it seems somewhat of a wraith. There is a neat and comely mind which presents always an ordered loveliness, and its danger is that it may at times run thin. But there is a rich, big, gross sort of mind, splendid and terrible, declining sometimes upon bathos, mounting often to a pride of chase where it can attain and overlook the grand style. Its beauty "hath ever some strangeness in the proportion." Its danger is of clinging too close to clay, Antæus-like, or building up complications too intricate of "cycle on epicycle, orb on orb." Donne's genius was of this sort and so was Meredith's. If obscure it is that they are darkened with excess of light. It is the same Northern strain in the blood that banded the façades of Lombard churches with wild beasts, that carved the capitals of rock-based Benedictine abbeys with gross, grotesque and terrible imaginings, that poised the gargoyles to spy down upon cities from cathedral towers and set the drolleries of the *misereres* under every stall of the choir; this very strain determined Meredith's style, though the other part of him, the Celt, breathed pure fire into the mass, the breath of the finer spirit of life that taught him love and song and landscape.

Meredith's genius was akin to the green and fertile earth, with its rich yield of corn and wine, its capricious and wayward blossoms, its pebbly ways and russet briers. But still more was it like the wind, the cloud-dispeller, the tonic, "that bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof and knowest not whence it cometh nor whither it goeth—even so is every one that is born of the spirit."